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TITLE: Apparatus and method for printing an information-based indicia program (IBIP) postage in a printer driver system

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US-CL-CURRENT: 705/26

ABSTRACT: A method and apparatus for printing an information-based indicia program (IBIP) postage in a computer printing subsystem is disclosed wherein a third-party word processing software with mail merge capabilities generates text and a matching address as the input for a client application in high-volume document processing and mail systems without programmatically altering the word processing program to accommodate the printing subsystem. Addresses are validated and corrected in the printing subsystems prior to creation of the indicia image and address image to be printed on the mailpiece.

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Abstract Paragraph - ABTX: A method and apparatus for printing an information-based indicia program (IBIP) postage in a computer printing subsystem is disclosed wherein a third-party word processing software with mail merge capabilities generates text and a matching address as the input for a client application in high-volume document processing and mail systems without programmatically altering the word processing program to accommodate the printing subsystem. Addresses are validated and corrected in the printing subsystems prior to creation of the indicia image and address image to be printed on the mailpiece.

Summary of Invention Paragraph - BSTX: [0005] The advent of personal computers and high-quality printers has led to a number of third-party word processing application programs that have the capability to generate an addressed, matched mailing wherein the document is matched with the envelope address using the mail merge capabilities of the application. PC applications such as Microsoft Word generate mail using printer-generated indicia on commercially available printers. It would be desirable to use such third party applications in high volume document processing and mail systems such as, for example, the ADDRESSRIGHT.RTM. printing system produced by applicant without programmatically altering the third party application to accommodate the printer drivers of the printing system.

Summary of Invention Paragraph - BSTX: [0008] The present invention substantially obviates, if not entirely eliminates, the disadvantages of utilizing a third-party word processing application

having mail merge capabilities in a high volume document production and mailing system by printing the destination address to a printing subsystem that selects textual information to format and create a valid address which is passed to an IBIP indicia generator to create an indicia image to be printed on the mail piece.

Summary of Invention Paragraph - BSTX: [0009] The first aspect of the present invention is a method of printing postage and an address in a printing subsystem. The method comprises the steps of: producing an address -matched mail piece having a set of text data while utilizing a word processing software application with a mail merge capability; printing the address matched mail piece to a printer driver as a print stream; determining which information contained within the address matched mail piece is textual information and which information is control code information; removing the control code information from the address -matched mail piece; sending the textual information to a print stream processor module which parses the address from the textual information and sends the textual information to a document printer, and sends the parsed address to an address correction/coder component to assure that a valid address has been processed; determining that each address is valid, and if the address is not valid, then correcting the address in accordance with a predetermined set of instructions to make it valid; and sending the valid address to an IBIP indicia generator to create an indicia image and an address image to be printed on the mailpiece.

Summary of Invention Paragraph - BSTX: [0010] The second aspect of the present invention is a system for printing IBIP postage and an address to a mailpiece . The system comprises:

Summary of Invention Paragraph - BSTX: [0012] (b) means for printing the address-matched mailpiece to a printer driver as a print stream;

Summary of Invention Paragraph - BSTX: [0013] (c) means for determining within the printing subsystem which information contained within the address-matched mailpiece is textual information and which information is control code information;

Claims Text - CLTX: 1. In a system for printing one or more addresses to a mailpiece, a method of printing postage and an address, said method comprising the steps of: (a) producing an address matched mailpiece having a set of text data while utilizing a word processing software application with a mail merge capability; (b) printing said address matched mailpiece information to a printer driver as a print stream; (c) sending said print stream information to a print stream processor module; (d) determining at said print stream processor module which information contained within said address matched mailpiece is textual information and which information is control code information; (e) removing said control code information from said address matched mailpiece; (f) parsing the one or more addresses from said textual information and sending said textual information to a document printer, and sending said parsed one or more addresses to an address correction/coder component to assure that a valid address has been processed; (g) determining that each one of said parsed one or more addresses is valid, and if said parsed address is not valid, then correcting said parsed address in accordance with a predetermined set of instructions to make it

valid; and (g) sending said valid address to an IBIP indicia generator to create an indicia image and an address image to be printed on said mailpiece.

Claims Text - CLTX: 2. A mailing system for printing IBIP postage and an address to a mailpiece, said system comprising: (a) means for producing an address matched mailpiece having a set of text data while utilizing a word processing software application with a mail merge capability; (b) means for printing said address matched mailpiece to a printer driver as a print stream; (c) means for sending said print stream information to a print stream processor module; (d) means for determining, at the print stream processor module, which information contained within said address matched mailpiece is textual information and which information is control code information; (e) means for removing said control code information from said address matched mailpiece; (f) means for parsing said one or more addresses from said textual information and sends said textual information to a document printer, and sends said parsed one or more addresses to an address correction/coder component to assure that a valid address has been processed; (g) means for determining that each one of said one or more addresses is valid, and if said address is not valid, then correcting said address in accordance with a predetermined set of instructions to make it valid; and (h) an IBIP indicia generator means for creating an indicia image and an address image to be printed on said mailpiece.

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TITLE: METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR GENERATING AND DISTRIBUTION OF
SURFACE MAIL OBJECTS

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INVENTOR-INFORMATION:

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US-CL-CURRENT: 705/14

ABSTRACT: A method for generating and distributing mail items includes creating a first and a second mail file, wherein each of the first and second mail files includes recipient address information, and wherein the first mail file is generated by a first user, and the second mail file is generated by a second user. The first and second mail files are then transmitted to a mail service computer over a global computer network and printed, on a single sheet of media, a first mail item in accordance with the first mail file, and a second mail item in accordance with the second mail file. The first and second mail items are then placed into a surface mail system. The first mail item is addressed in accordance with the first recipient address information, and the second mail item is addressed in accordance with the second recipient address information. The mail item is then placed into the surface mail system in such a way as to minimize handling damage, and to leverage available postal technology. The mail items are then delivered to the postal addresses of the intended recipients.

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Abstract Paragraph - ABTX: A method for generating and distributing mail items includes creating a first and a second mail file, wherein each of the first and second mail files includes recipient address information, and wherein the first mail file is generated by a first user, and the second mail file is generated by a second user. The first and second mail files are then transmitted to a mail service computer over a global computer network and printed, on a single sheet of media, a first mail item in accordance with the first mail file, and a second mail item in accordance with the second mail file. The first and second mail items are then placed into a surface mail system. The first mail item is addressed in accordance with the first recipient address information, and the second mail item is addressed in accordance with the second recipient address information. The mail item is then placed into the surface mail system in such a way as to minimize handling damage, and to leverage available postal technology. The mail items are then delivered to the postal addresses of the intended recipients.

Summary of Invention Paragraph - BSTX: [0016] The present invention provides systems and methods which overcome the shortcomings of the prior art. In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, a method for generating and distributing mail items includes the steps of

creating a first and a second mail file, wherein each of said first and second mail files includes recipient address information, and wherein said first mail file is generated by a first user, and said second mail file is generated by a second user; transmitting said first and second mail files to a mail service computer over a global computer network; printing, on a single sheet of media, a first mail item in accordance with said first mail file, and a second mail item in accordance with said second mail file; and placing said first and second mail items into a surface mail system, wherein said first mail item is addressed in accordance with said first recipient address information, and said second mail item is addressed in accordance with said second recipient address information.

Detail Description Paragraph - DETX: [0043] Surface Mail 120, which is depicted conceptually in FIG. 1, provides for physical delivery to recipients 130 of mail items produced by printing facilities 114. In this regard, a variety of land and air delivery schemes may be used. In a preferred embodiment, surface mail 120 corresponds to the U.S. Postal Service. A particular recipient 130 may be any individual or group located in the U.S. or internationally which has a specified postal address or post office box number.

Detail Description Paragraph - DETX: [0127] In general, because of the advertising potential of mail pieces delivered to recipients 130, partial or complete underwriting of postage by unrelated commercial establishments is possible. In addition to printing text, graphics, address, bar code, and other indicia as may be required by surface mail system 120, the mail service computer 110 may apply advertising to the finished mail item on behalf of business that partially or fully pay the printing and postage costs. User can then enjoy free or reduced-cost mailing of their individually created mail pieces. The advertising can, in this way, be highly focused.

Claims Text - CLTX: 1. A method for generating and distributing mail items, said method comprising the steps of: creating, within a mail service computer, a first and a second mail file, wherein each of said first and second mail files includes recipient address information, and wherein said first mail file is generated by a first user, and said second mail file is generated by a second user; said creating step including the step of allowing said first and second users to specify the contents of said first and second mail files via a first user system and a second user system coupled to said mail service computer over a computer network; transmitting said first and second mail files to a printing facility; printing, on a single sheet of media, a first mail item in accordance with said first mail file, and a second mail item in accordance with said second mail file; and placing said first and second mail items into a surface mail system, wherein said first mail item is addressed in accordance with said first recipient address information, and said second mail item is addressed in accordance with said second recipient address information.

Claims Text - CLTX: 38. A distributed system for generating and delivering mail items, said system comprising: a first user system and a second user system coupled to a mail service computer over a computer network, said first user system configured to allow a first user to specify the contents of a first mail file, and said second user system configured to allow a second user to specify the contents of a second mail file; said mail service computer configured to store said first and second mail files, wherein each of said first and second mail files includes recipient address

information; a printing facility coupled to said mail service computer, said printing facility configured to receive said first and second mail files and to print, on a single sheet of media, said first mail item in accordance with said first mail file, and a second mail item in accordance with said second mail file; and a surface mail system operable to deliver said first and second mail items, wherein said first mail item is addressed in accordance with said first recipient address information, and said second mail item is addressed in accordance with said second recipient address information.

Claims Text - CLTX: 53. The method of claim 38, wherein said mail service computer is configured to provide automatic address correction of said recipient address information prior to said printing step.